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STATE FOR EUR/CE, EUR/OHI, AND DRL/AE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: POLAND'S ROMA: MIXED REACTION TO EU REPORT

REFLECTS RIVALRY AMONG ROMA GROUPS

REF: A. WARSAW 383
[1](#)B. 08 KRAKOW 109

Classified By: Krakow Consul General Anne Hall for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Mixed reactions to the recent EU Agency for Fundamental Rights report, which concludes that Poland's Roma suffer some of the worst discrimination in Europe, reflect strong rivalry and division among the Roma groups themselves, particularly where access to state and EU funding is concerned. These rivalries, as well as tension between a major Roma organization and the Ministry of Interior, could complicate planning for the 65th Commemoration of the Holocaust of Roma at Auschwitz-Birkenau August 2. End Summary.

EU: POLAND ONE OF WORST COUNTRIES IN EUROPE FOR
ROMA DISCRIMINATION

[1](#)2. (U) An April 22 report issued by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that 76 percent of surveyed Roma in Poland believe that there is widespread ethnic discrimination against Roma among Poles, 28 percent reported being either threatened or attacked, and 53 percent said they avoid certain areas for fear of discrimination. According to the EU report, Roma in Poland are most discriminated against in private services such as banks, stores, and restaurants. The report also notes that, in comparison to the general Polish population, Roma have inferior access to the labor market, health care, and quality education.

[1](#)3. (U) Even though the FRA report concluded that discrimination against ethnic minorities in Europe as a whole is much more frequent than official statistics indicate, according to press reports, many Poles were shocked that Polish Roma were found to be among the groups in Europe that face the highest levels of discrimination.

GOP: "LIMITED CONFIDENCE" IN REPORT

[1](#)4. (C) Dobieslaw Rzemieniewski (STRICTLY PROTECT), Head of the National Minorities Division of the Department of Denominations and National Minorities in the Ministry of Internal Affairs told Embassy Warsaw that he has "limited confidence" in the FRA report. He underscored what Mission Poland has heard from many Roma contacts -- the situation for the Roma in Poland is much better than in many other countries in Europe.

POLISH ROMA ALSO DISAGREE ON REPORT FINDINGS

15. (C) Adam Bartosz, Director of the Tarnow Roma Museum and Editor-in-Chief of Romologica expressed skepticism about the report's reliability. He suggested that some Roma groups have recently adopted a victimist approach as part of a strategy to extract demands from local and state authorities.

In the process, they have started to convince themselves that there truly is rampant discrimination. Elzbieta Mirga-Wojtowicz, the Malopolska Regional Governor's Plenipotentiary for Minority Affairs and Andrzej Mirga (STRICTLY PROTECT), OSCE Senior Advisor for Roma Issues, both expressed shock at the report's findings. Mirga acknowledged from personal experience that Roma still face difficulties in Poland, but said that the lot of Roma in Poland simply cannot be compared with that of Roma in Romania or Bulgaria, for instance, where the situation is "critical." Mirga said he would go so far as to suggest that politicians conduct a critical analysis of the report, with a statement of support from Parliament.

16. (C) On the other side of the scale, Roman Kwiatkowski, Chairman, Roma People's Association of Poland (a generally controversial figure currently at odds with the Polish government on at least two issues) characterized the report as "absolutely right." According to Kwiatkowski, the Polish Government is doing nothing to improve the situation of Roma.

He alleged that the Government Program for the Roma Community (2004-2013) is poorly managed, that there is no shared responsibility for aid money, that local self-governments appropriate funds meant to benefit Roma, and that local government labor officials are arrogant and racist.

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17. (C) NB: Kwiatkowski is currently at odds with the Ministry of Interior regarding allocation of EU funds targeted at stimulating Roma employment. He accuses Ministry officials of not truly partnering with Roma contacts and instead pre-selecting meek partners unwilling to criticize the government. Kwiatkowski may be a firebrand, but he heads one of the most significant Roma associations in Poland, so his comments influence how Roma perceive their situation.

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CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION

18. (C) Tension between Kwiatkowski's organization and the Ministry of Interior will likely complicate planning for the August 2 commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the Holocaust of Roma at Auschwitz-Birkenau. While the Roma People's Association of Poland traditionally organizes the yearly event, Kwiatkowski said that the Ministry of Interior is both refusing to fund it and pushing forward with its own plans to announce a tender for planning the event. Kwiatkowski went so far as to say that the Ministry's actions reflect a "clear case of (Roma) Holocaust denial."

19. (C) The Interior Ministry's Rzemieniewski clarified that none of the 55 Roma associations qualified for the yearly grant money to organize the 65th anniversary event at Auschwitz-Birkenau because the groups were requesting unrealistic sums and could not agree among themselves on the scope of the event. (NB: Kwiatkowski came separately to ConGen Krakow requesting an equally unrealistic grant to organize the event.) The Ministry of Interior ultimately decided to work in concert with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum to organize a conference, and has redirected the 24,000 PLN (approx. 7,500 USD) for that end, he said.

COMMENT: REPORT FINDINGS ASIDE, ROUGH ROAD AHEAD

¶10. (SBU) The agreement between many key Roma groups and the Polish Ministry of Interior that the situation for Roma in Poland is not as dire as reflected in the EU FRA report is a reality check in terms of the report's reliability. Although Poland's Roma may fare better in relative terms compared to Roma elsewhere in Europe, there is still a rough road ahead to reach the goal of integrating Roma more fully into Polish society (ref B).

¶11. (SBU) While there are shining examples of innovation, GOP inefficiencies in administering programs targeted at Roma and persistent rivalries among Roma groups themselves only complicate matters. These rivalries unfortunately also threaten to mar the 65th commemoration of the Roma Holocaust, which otherwise traditionally serves as a somber beacon of solidarity.

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